

drafters of the response to McCain, Heather Sibbison, drafted the letter to be a “blanket denial” of the allegations raised by McCain.⁸⁴⁸ Moreover, John Leshy, who edited the McCain letter and apparently altered the wording of the Eckstein denial, states – consistent with Babbitt’s testimony – that he had no conversations with Babbitt about the Eckstein denial. At a minimum, then, Babbitt allowed the drafters of the letter to draft it under the false impression that the Eckstein allegations were flatly wrong, and they drafted the letter to McCain accordingly. When the final draft arrived on Babbitt’s desk, he signed it as it was written.⁸⁴⁹ Babbitt states that he “reviewed [the letter] with some care,” “focused on” the phrasing of the Eckstein denial, and was “satisfied” and “confident” that it was an “accurate response” to McCain.⁸⁵⁰

Babbitt to this day stands by the McCain letter as consistent with both his recollection and his letter to Sen. Thompson. However, even assuming *arguendo* that the letter was literally accurate, Babbitt’s parsing of his response to McCain, combined with his admissions concerning the letter, still show that he misled McCain. Babbitt admitted during this investigation that he was “oblique” in his letter to McCain.⁸⁵¹ Babbitt has conceded that he “chose” not to provide in the letter the fact that he invoked Ickes’s name to Eckstein,⁸⁵² and has acknowledged that he

⁸⁴⁸OIC Sibbison Int. at 15.

⁸⁴⁹Babbitt has provided somewhat conflicting versions of his review of his letter to McCain. On the one hand, Babbitt has stated that he probably edited the letter before he signed it; yet elsewhere, Babbitt has denied that he made any edits to the letter before signing it.

⁸⁵⁰Babbitt G.J. Test., July 7, 1999, at 218-19, 298-99.

⁸⁵¹*Id.* at 290. According to Webster’s II New College Dictionary, the term “oblique” is defined as “[i]ndirect or evasive,” as well as “devious or dishonest.” Webster’s II New College Dictionary at 815 (Houghton Mifflin Co. 1995).

⁸⁵²Babbitt G.J. Test., July 7, 1999, at 220.